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KILLARNEY. No. II.



RUINS OF IRELLAGH, OR MUCRUSS ABBEY.

MUCRUSS ABBEY.

..... Deep empty tombs,
And dells, and mouldering shrines, with old decay,
Rustic, and green, and wide embowering shades
Shot from the crooked clefts of nodding towers.

In our former sketch of the general situation of the three Lakes of Killarney, we stated that two of them are placed at the foot of the mountain-range, upon which, at a considerable elevation, the third lies. This third, or "Upper" Lake communicates with each of the two Lower Lakes, (Turk Lake and Lower Lake, as they were called,) by means of a river whose two branches enter them separately. These two Lower Lakes, however, are themselves but partially separated; the only barrier between them is a long peninsula, or tongue of land, which stretches about half way across their breadth,—and two or three small islands, which seem as if originally they had been merely a continuation of the tongue of land, but afterwards had been cut off from it, and from one another, by the action of the water forcing a passage at different points. This tongue of land is called Mucruss Peninsula; and it forms a part of the very

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celebrated "Mucruss demesne," which is one of the great attractions of Killarney. It is not our intention now to describe the beauties of this favoured spot: our present notice will be confined to an account of the ruined old abbey, which constitutes one of its most interesting features.

The old abbey of Irrelagh, or Mucruss Abbey, to use its modern appellation, is situated at the commencement of the peninsula, or the root of the tongue of land: it stands on an eminence in the richest part of the demesne, at a short distance from the road leading to the mansion-house, or Turk Lodge.

A ruined church (says Mr. Weld) is a common object, which, independent of the picturesque beauty it may possess, excites little interest; but the sight of a monastery carries us back to distant ages, and gives rise to a train of reflection, which every mind of sensibility feels a pleasure in indulging. We remember that these places were the asylums of men who, voluntarily renouncing the seducing pleasures of the world, devoted themselves to the services of charity and of religion.... Hither, during the ages of violence and rapine, those who by inclination were disposed to retirement and to ease, could withdraw in safety from the dangers of contending factions, and devote themselves to the calm and tranquil pursuits of literature. These were the sacred retreats of learning, where the germs of know-

ledge were preserved, till a more genial season bade them spring forth and flourish in open day.

At the same time we cannot behold these ancient fabrics, their dismal aisles, their dark and narrow cells, without drawing a comparison favourable to ourselves, between the gloomy and bigoted notions of monkery, and the more enlightened opinions of modern days. Far from regretting their decline, the philosophic mind triumphs at the dissolution of institutions which were disgraced by vices of the grossest nature; where superstition was fostered, and the streams of knowledge polluted at their source. In this very abbey, a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary was preserved, by whose movements, directed at will, the friars imposed on the credulity of many an unsuspecting votary.

The remains to be seen at the present day, consist of the ruins of a church, and some other buildings, appropriated to the service of the religious community which was formerly seated here. The whole length of the church is about one hundred feet, and its breadth twenty-four. The steeple, built upon four lofty pointed arches, under which there is a free communication, stands between the nave and the chancel. The principal entrance is at the west end, under a large pointed arch of blueish marble, decorated by several mouldings, plain but well wrought, and in good preservation. From this entrance, the visitor has a very pleasing view of the great eastern window, which is seen through the arches of the steeple; and also of the large portal of the transept on the south side of the nave. The steeple is of rather trifling dimensions. Dr. Smith informs us, in his *History of Kerry*, that in his days the bell of the monastery was discovered in the lake, at a short distance from the shore of Mucruss,—a circumstance from which it has been inferred, that the building at some period suffered from violence. Mr. Weld suggests that probably the soldiers of the parliamentary army, during Cromwell's time, were instrumental to its destruction; as the country about Killarney was a distinguished scene of their outrages.

The cloister is spoken of as the most perfect portion of the remains, and as seeming to have been originally the best-executed part of the whole fabric. It consists of a quadrangle, forty-six feet square, around which runs an arcade, or vaulted walk, six feet wide, whose pillars and arches are formed of blueish and pale-red marble. The pillars, destitute of ornaments, unless a few horizontal grooves at equal distances can be considered in that light, are all finished exactly alike; but the arches on different sides vary both in number and in form. On two of the contiguous sides, there are ten of them, and in the pointed, or Gothic style; on the other pair of contiguous sides, there are twelve arches of the semi-circular, or Saxon style.

How this capricious variety, (says Mr. Weld,) so frequently to be observed in the religious buildings of those infant days of art and taste, was first introduced, we can now only conjecture: beauty and utility alike disown it as their offspring. Probably it originated in the dissensions which arose among the brotherhood before the style of their future residence was determined; and of the obstinacy with which they contended, and the folly with which they compromised this important subject, the Abbey of Mucruss to this day remains a striking and a melancholy monument.

In the centre of the cloister stands a remarkably large yew-tree. "We have some fine churchyard specimens in England," says Mr. Barrow, "but I do not remember any superior to that of Mucruss Abbey." It rises in a straight smooth stem, to the height of about fourteen feet, when it throws out several large arms, which fill the whole court of the cloisters, and mounting above the highest walls, almost entirely overshadows the building. Such is the gloominess diffused over the cloister by this canopy of thick and dusky foliage, that the bat is frequently

observed flitting through the vaulted arches at noon-day; and some visitors have found their nerves not sufficiently strong to endure a lengthened stay.

This tree, it may be supposed, was long a favourite with the monks; but much as they might have rejoiced in its flourishing state, had they continued to occupy the monastery until the present day, they must have consented, however reluctantly, either to strip it of its honours, or to relinquish the studies of their darkened cells.

Travellers, down to a very recent period, tell us that the guide generally recommends them to beware of injuring this sacred tree, and that a story is very gravely narrated of a soldier who, having the impious audacity to strip off a small piece of the bark with his penknife, quickly expired on the spot. A writer of the last century says,—

My Cicerone, pointing to a wound in the bark of it, told me with a very grave face that the wretch who had the hardness to inflict it paid the full price of his sacrilege; for that a numbness instantly seized the guilty arm, spread gradually over his whole frame, and in a few minutes despatched him.

Beneath the shade of this tree are four tombs without any inscriptions; they are not very ancient, and are supposed to have belonged to persons of the religious order to which the abbey belonged.

This yew-tree, however, is not the only vegetable wonder of the place.

Outside the walls (says Mr. Barrow), there is a stem of ivy almost as thick as an ordinary man's body, curiously twisted and distorted, owing apparently to its having been forced to protrude its way through a heap of human bones that were piled up in the corner where it was growing, but which are now removed; the Duke of Northumberland having, as I was told by the guide, directed this to be done, on visiting the place when lord-lieutenant of Ireland. Among the luxuriant ferns, and the mosses, and the lichens, which grow on the gray rocks here, and in many other parts along the margins of the lakes, there was one species of moss of most extraordinary luxuriance growing in whole beds of considerable extent, and bearing the colour of a clear, shining, emerald green: it is the *Hypnum alopecurum*, the fox-tailed hypnum.

At two of the opposite corners of the cloister, there are stairs leading to the cells over the arcade, and to the chief apartments of the Abbey. The latter are in a very dilapidated state, but several of the cells remain entire; and under the little gratings by which they were lighted, "one may still see the broad flat stones upon which the monks offered up their orisons, worn and polished by the pressure of many a weary knee." Around the summit of the building there is a safe walk, defended by an embattled parapet.

The lake from hence is barely visible through the trees; but were a very few of the intervening branches removed, the view would be delightful. It is impossible, indeed, not to extol the taste which the monks displayed in choosing a situation for their Abbey.

The ruins of other apartments may be discovered in other quarters. In one place is a long, narrow room, on the ground-floor, called the cellar: it is very imperfectly lighted, and the stone ceiling is an object of curiosity, as illustrating the mode in which arches were turned in the days when this Abbey was built. Over the cellar is the kitchen of the monks: it has the floor perfect, but is destitute of a roof. A refectory and a dormitory may also be seen in a tolerable state of completeness.

The vaults and winding passages of the Abbey, (says Mr. Weld,) are still more gloomy than the cloister:—

There through thick walls, oblique the broken light,
From narrow loop-holes quivers to the sight.

This obscurity adds much to the effect of the ruin; and, combined with the stillness and solitude of deep retirement, the fragments of monumental grandeur, and the frightful spectacles of mouldering mortality, forms an association highly calculated to inspire the imagination with visionary

fears. As you wander on, the mind, yielding to the impression of such gloomy images, becomes abstracted from this world. The shade of every waving branch is converted to a spectre, and the echoes of the footsteps to the whispering of the ideal inhabitants. The startled senses distrust their own perception, and the delusion can scarcely be dispelled by returning to the cheerful regions of light and life.

The attachment of the Irish peasantry to their family burial-place is boundless. Mucruss Abbey is very favourite place of sepulture; and it is said that bodies are not unfrequently conveyed from a distance of twenty miles across the mountains, to be interred within its precincts. The cemetery is on the south side of the abbey; it is very small, and the depth of the soil inconsiderable. The consequence is, that coffins, with their mouldering contents, are not unfrequently removed, to make room for others, "long before decency can warrant such a measure;" and though the place from time to time is carefully cleared, yet the bones, skulls, and coffin-boards, that are prematurely dug up, quickly accumulate again. The boards are deposited in the vaults; the bones and skulls are heaped up in the angle formed by the transept, and the nave of the church at the outside of the building, where many thousands of them may be seen bleached to an extraordinary degree of whiteness by their exposure to the weather.

The floor of the cellar, which we mentioned in our description of the ruins, is spoken of by Mr. Wright, as exhibiting "a spectacle shocking to humanity;" lids of coffins with their commemorating inscriptions, skulls and bones which have not lost the odour of putrefaction, lie strewn upon the ground. In a small closet near the cellar, these coffin-boards are stowed so thickly, that all entrance is prevented. When Sir John Carr visited Killarney, in 1805, the sight of these mouldering relics of humanity, produced such an effect upon him, that he fancied the very atmosphere to be fatally pestilent; and when he published his *Tour*, he emphatically assured all future visitors, that if they passed within the walls of the building, death would probably be their doom.

So loaded with contagion, (he says,) is the air in this spot, that every principle of humanity imperiously calls upon the indulgent owner to exercise his right of closing it up as a place of sepulture in future; I warn every one who visits Killarney, as he values life, not to enter this abbey. Contrast renders doubly horrible the ghastly contemplation of human dissolution, tainting the surrounding air in a spot which nature has enriched with a profusion of romantic beauty.

This statement is, however, overcharged; as for the suggestion of closing the cemetery,—a little reflection would have convinced the writer that it was altogether impracticable.

The intelligent guide who conducted me over the ruins, (says Mr. Barrow,) informed me, that ten-pence only was the sum demanded for the interment of each person, but permission must first be obtained, and proof be brought that some of the applicant's ancestors had held graves, (or, rather, that graves had held the ancestors.) The man pointed out to me a vault, which he had selected for himself, whenever it might come to his turn to be laid therein, though the first of his family that had been laid in that particular spot, observing at the same time,—“And sure, it's a mighty pleasant thing to be decently put in the earth along wid your own people.” I could not but admire the cool manner in which he spoke on the subject; but this is a national trait: they not only very frequently provide their coffins, and keep them, as the Chinese do, conspicuously in the house, but make a point of laying by, out of their savings, a sum of money to enable their survivors to give, at their death, a glorious wake, and also a handsome funeral, besides something to the priest, to pray for their souls while in purgatory!

The peasantry of the country around Killarney,

are not, however, the only tenants of this cemetery; persons of property and station in the district, are often equally desirous of having their last resting-place within the venerated precincts of this ancient abbey.

Mucruss Abbey is of great antiquity, but the exact period of its foundation is a matter of doubt. According to some statements, it was as early as 1230; according to others, it was not till 1449. Archdall, in his *Monasticon Hibernicum*, fixes the foundation in 1440, and ascribes it to Donald, son of Thady M'Carthy. The founder improved and repaired it a few months before his death. In conformity with his design, it belonged to the Conventual Franciscans, whose rules, though so much relaxed from the original institutions of their patron, St. Francis, as to have occasioned a schism in the order, yet still did not allow them to hold extensive territorial possessions; “but in the superior construction of the convents, and the convenience of their accommodations, the brotherhood endeavoured to make themselves ample amends for the mortification to which they were otherwise subjected.” The Abbey came into the possession of the crown at the Reformation. The lands, amounting to four acres, two orchards, and one garden, estimated at sixteen shillings per annum, were granted by Queen Elizabeth to Captain Robert Collam; but it would seem, that the monks continued to inhabit the Abbey for some time afterwards, from the following inscription on a stone, in the north wall of the chancel of the church:—

Pray for the happy state of brother Thadeus Holenus, who superintended the rebuilding or repairing of this sacred convent, A.D. 1626.

Of the history of the Abbey subsequently to this period, or of the manner in which it fell into desolation, we have no account whatsoever. Its destruction is not at all surprising; the wonder would have been its preservation, in a country devastated by wars, such as have afflicted Ireland.

The festival of St. Francis, the patron saint of the Abbey, is celebrated here in the month of July; upon this occasion, the peasantry assemble in great numbers, and it is to be presumed, that the scenes which usually grace a patron-day in Ireland, are not omitted.

Arthur Young speaks of Mucruss Abbey as one of the most interesting scenes he ever saw; and he describes it very happily.

It is, (he says,) the ruin of a considerable abbey of Henry the Sixth's time, and so entire, that if it were more so, though the building would be more perfect, the ruin would be less pleasing; it is half obscured in the shade of some venerable ash-trees; ivy has given the picturesque circumstance which that plant alone can confer, while the broken walls, and ruined turrets, throw over it—

The last mournful graces of decay.

Heaps of skulls and bones, scattered about, with nettles, briars, and weeds, sprouting in tufts from the loose stones, all unite to raise those melancholy impressions which are the merit of such scenes, and which can scarcely anywhere be felt more completely. The cloisters form a dismal area, in the centre of which grows the most prodigious yew-tree I ever beheld, in one great stem, two feet diameter, and fourteen feet high, from whence a vast head of branches spreads on every side, so as to form a perfect canopy to the whole space; I looked for its fit inhabitant—it is a spot, where—

The moping owl doth to the moon complain.

This ruin is in the true style in which all such buildings should appear; there is not an intruding circumstance,—the hand of dress has not touched it,—melancholy is the impression which such scenes should kindle, and it is here raised most powerfully.

BECOME not proud in thy prosperity, nor desperate in thine adversity.—SIR THOMAS SMITH.

EASY LESSONS ON CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

No. VI.

MIRACLES. PART III.

THERE are persons, some of whom you may perhaps meet with, who, though they are believers in Christianity, yet will not allow that the miracles recorded in Scripture are any ground for their belief. They are convinced (they will tell you) that Jesus Christ came from God, because "never man spake like this man." They find the religion so pure and admirable in itself, and they feel it so well suited to their wants, and to the wants of all mankind, and so full of heavenly wisdom and goodness, that they need no other proof of its being from heaven; but as for miracles, these (they will tell you) are among the difficulties to be got over: they believe them as a *part* of the religion, from finding them recorded in the Bible, but they would have believed the Gospel as easily, or more easily, without them. The miracles (they will say) were indeed a proof to those who lived at the time, and *saw* them; but to us of the present day, who only *read* of them, they are a part of our faith, and not a part of the *evidence* of our faith. For it is a greater trial of faith, they say, to believe in such wonderful works as Jesus is said to have performed, than to believe that such wise and excellent doctrine as He delivered was truly from heaven.

Now there is indeed much truth in a part of what these persons say; but they do not take a clear view of the whole subject of evidence. It is indeed true, that there is, as they observe, great weight in the internal evidence (as it is called) of Christianity; that is, the reasons for believing it from the character of the religion itself. The more you study it, the more strongly you will perceive that it is such a religion as no man would have been likely to invent, and of all men a Jew most unlikely. But there are many different kinds of evidence for the same truth; and one kind of evidence may be the most impress one man's mind, and another another's. And, among the rest, the Christian miracles certainly are a very decisive proof of the truth of Christ's religion to any one, who is convinced (as you have seen there is reason to be,) that they really were wrought. Of course, there is more difficulty for us in making out this point, than there was for men who lived at the same times and places with Jesus and his Apostles; but when this point *has* been made out, and we do believe the miracles, they are no less a proof of the religion to us than to those early Christians.

It is quite a mistake to suppose that the difficulty of proving any fact makes that fact, when it *is* proved, a less convincing proof of something else. For example,—to take an instance formerly given,—those who live in the neighbourhood of the places where great beds of sea-shells are found near the tops of hills, and have seen them there themselves, are convinced by this, that at some time or other those beds must have been under the sea. Now a person who lives at a distance from such places, has more difficulty than those on the spot, in making out whether there are any such beds of shells. He has to inquire of travellers, or of those who have conversed with them, and to consult books, and perhaps examine pieces of the rock containing some of the shells; but when once he is fully satisfied that there are such beds of sea-shells, this is just as good a proof to him as to the others, that the sea must have formerly covered them.

And so also in respect of the Christian miracles. The difficulty we may have in deciding whether they were really wrought, does not make them (when we

are convinced that they were wrought) a less decisive proof that the Christian religion is from God.

But as for the difficulty of believing in anything so strange and wonderful as those miracles, you should remember that every difficulty (as was observed before) should be weighed against that on the opposite side. Now the difficulty of believing the miracles recorded in our sacred books, is much less than the opposite difficulty of believing that the Christian religion was established without miracles. That a Jewish peasant should have overthrown the religion of the civilized world without the aid of any miracles, is far more miraculous, at least more incredible, than any thing that our books relate; and it will appear still more incredible, if you remember that this wonderful change was brought about *by means of an appeal to miracles*. Jesus and his Apostles certainly *professed* to display miraculous powers in proof of their being sent from God; and this would have been the greatest hinderance to their propagating a new religion, if they had really possessed no such powers; because this pretence would have laid them open to detection and ridicule.

But there is a distinction between our religion and all others, which is often overlooked. Almost all religions have some miraculous pretensions connected with them; that is, miracles are recorded to have been wrought in support of some pagan religion among people who already believed it. But you will not find that any religion except ours was ever *introduced*,—and introduced among enemies,—by miraculous pretensions. Ours is the only faith that ever was *founded* on an appeal to the evidence of miracles. And we have every reason to believe, that no such attempt ever did or could succeed, if the miracles were not really performed. The difficulty, therefore, of believing that the Christian religion was propagated by means of miracles, is nothing in comparison of the difficulty of believing that it could have been propagated without any.

Indeed, we have every reason to believe that many *more* miracles must have been performed than are particularly related. Several particular cases, indeed, of our Lord's miracles were described; but besides these, we are told, in various places, of great multitudes of sick people being brought to him, and that "He healed them all." (Matt. xii. 15; xix. 2.) So, also, besides particular miracles related as done by the Apostles, (Acts ii. 33; iii. 7; ix. 33; xiii. 11; xiv. 8; xxviii. 5;) we are told, generally, of their not only performing many miracles, (Acts viii. 6; xix. 11,) but also bestowing miraculous powers on great numbers of disciples, (Acts vi. 5, 8; x. 44; xix. 6.) And we find St. Paul, in one of his Epistles, speaking of it as a thing familiarly known, that miracles were "the signs of an Apostle." (2 Cor. xii. 12.) And in all these books, we find miracles not boastfully dwelt on, or described as something unusual, but alluded to, as familiarly known to the persons to whom the books were immediately addressed; that is, to the Christians of those days.

But besides the accounts given in the Christian Scriptures, we might be sure from the very nature of the case, that the Apostles could never have even *gained a hearing*, at least among the Gentiles, if they had not displayed some extraordinary and supernatural power. Fancy a few poor Jewish fishermen, tent-makers, and peasants, going into one of the great Roman or Grecian cities, whose inhabitants were proud of the splendid temples, and beautiful images of their gods, which had been worshipped time out of mind by their ancestors; they were proud, too, of their schools of philosophy, where those reputed the wis-

men among them discoursed on the most curious and sublime subjects to the youth of the noblest families; and then fancy these Jewish strangers telling them to cast away their images as an abominable folly, to renounce the religion of their ancestors, to reject with scorn the instructions of their philosophers, and to receive instead, as a messenger from heaven, a Jew of humble station, who had been put to the most shameful death. How do you think men would have been received, who should have made such an attempt as this, with merely such weak human means as preaching? You cannot doubt that all men would have scorned them, and ridiculed or pitied them as madmen.

As for the wisdom, and purity, and sublimity of the religion of the Gospel, this might have gained them some attention;—not, indeed, among the mass of the people, who were too gross to relish or perceive this purity and wisdom,—but among a very few of the better sort, if once they could be brought to listen to the description of the religion. And this, perhaps, they might have done, if it had been taught by some Greek or Roman philosophers famous for knowledge and wisdom. But the Gospel was preached by men of a nation, which the Greeks and Romans looked down upon as barbarian, and whose religion especially, they scorned and detested for being so different from their own. And not only did the Apostles belong to this despised nation, but they were the outcasts of that very nation, being rejected and abhorred by the chief part of their Jewish brethren.

If, therefore, they had come among the Gentiles, teaching the most sublime religious doctrine, and trusting merely to the excellence of what they taught, it is impossible they should have even had a hearing. It is not enough to say, that no one would have believed them; but no one would even have listened to them, if they had not first roused men's serious attention by working (as we are told they did,) "remarkable [special] miracles." Acts xix. 11.

Afterwards, indeed, when the Gospel had spread so as to excite general attention, many men would be likely to listen to the preaching of it even by persons, who did not pretend to miraculous power, but who merely bore witness to the miracles they had seen; giving proof at the same time that they were not false witnesses, by their firmness in facing persecution. And this was certainly a good ground for believing their testimony. For though men may be mistaken as to the *opinions* which they sincerely held, they could not be mistaken as to such *facts* as the Christian miracles of which they professed themselves eye-witnesses; as the Apostles, for instance, were, of their Master's resurrection. And it is not to be conceived that men would expose themselves to dangers, and tortures, and death, in attesting false stories, which they must have known to be false. If there had been any well-contrived imposture in respect of pretended miracles, it is impossible but that some at least, out of the many hundreds brought forward as eye-witnesses, would have been induced by threats, or tortures, or bribes, to betray the imposture.

There were many, therefore, who received the Gospel,—and with good reason,—on such testimony as this, as soon as they could be brought to listen to and examine it. But in the first instance, the Apostles could not have brought any, of the Gentiles at least, to listen to them, if they had not begun by working evident miracles themselves. A handful of Jewish strangers, of humble rank, would never have obtained a hearing among the most powerful, and most civilized, and proudest nations of the world, if they had not at first roused their attention by the display of some extraordinary powers.

ST. GREGORY'S CONTEMPLATION OF HIMSELF.

FLYING the society of men, and pursued by melancholy, I threw myself under the shade of the forest-trees, to indulge in contemplation.

How sweet a solace is it to our griefs, to be able to commune freely in solitude with our own hearts! Thousands of birds, perched upon the branches, animated the air, which echoed to their harmonious songs, and inspired my soul with a secret enjoyment.

Hidden in the verdure which sprang around, the grasshopper,—that lover of the sun,—mixed its noisy voice with their melodious notes, which rang through the interstices of the grove.

The waters of a clear brook purling close at my side, refreshed the parched earth.

Yet, notwithstanding the beauties of nature, my soul did not smart the less under its wounds.

It still plunged into the varying thoughts by which it is so often agitated.

What was I before I was born? what am I now? what shall I be to-morrow?

A thick film seemed to obscure my mental view. I asked the learned to guide me, but I found no one who knew any more than myself.

Wrapped in impenetrable clouds, I wander from desire to desire, without being able to satisfy myself respecting the object of my wishes, not even with the illusions of a dream.

This fleshly frame, in which we are held captive, intercepts every ray of light.

I exist,—what does the word mean? teach me! Already, whilst I speak, a portion of my existence has escaped me.

I am no longer what I was.

What shall I be to-morrow, should I still exist?

In no one thing stable, in no one thing permanent, I resemble the water of a stream, which perpetually flows on, which nothing stops.

Or rather,—but of all the objects which surround me, to what can I compare myself?

Like the brook, in another moment I shall be no longer the same I was the moment before.

I ought to be called by some other name.

You seize me now, you hold me, yet I escape.

Fugitive wave, never again will you traverse the space over which you have already flowed.

The same man whom you have once reflected in your waters will never again be reflected by them, exactly as he looked in them before.—*Book of the Fathers.*

"GARDENING," says Mr. Courtenay, in his life of Sir William Temple, "is a pursuit peculiarly adapted for reconciling and combining the tastes of the two sexes, and indeed of all ages. It is, therefore, of all amusements the most retentive of domestic affection. It is, perhaps, most warmly pursued by the very young, and by those who are far advanced in life,—before the mind is occupied with worldly business, and after it has become disgusted with it. There is nothing in it to remind of the bustle of political life, and it requires neither a sanguine disposition nor the prospect of a long life, to justify the expectation of a beautiful result from the slight and easy care which it exacts. Is it too much to say that the mind which can, with genuine taste, occupy itself in gardening, must have preserved some portion of youthful purity; that it must have escaped, during its passage through the active world, its deeper contaminations, and that no shame nor remorse can have found a seat in it."

Certainly it is not too much to say this of Sir William Temple; nor would it be too much to say it of his biographer, whether he occupy himself or not in gardening, as well as in literature, after many laborious years honourably passed in political and official life.—*The Doctor.*

ORIGIN OF THE MECHANICAL ARTS.

THE whole material world around us is a theatre of practical mechanics. Everything we look upon or touch, is more or less a machine; and from the time when he first grasps a plaything, or seeks to stay himself upright, above the narrow and tottering pedestal of his feet, until his *strength* fails him, and he goeth down to the grave, "where there is no knowledge and no device," every man is more or less a practical mechanic.

Every motion of his body is necessarily accompanied by an exceedingly-complicated operation of mechanics,—an adjustment of the resultant of the weight of all its parts over the narrow pedestal of the feet,—and so various are the positions into which he is continually thrown, and so nice the conditions of his equilibrium,—each action of every part requiring an appropriate attitude of the whole, and each such attitude being assumed so as to produce the least possible displacement of the whole,—that he may be said to get up and lie down, to rest and move about, in the continual exercise of infinite mechanical skill.

What is the nature or character of this instinctive skill, it is no easy matter to determine. That it is in some measure an operation of the mind, appears evident, because there are certain states of the understanding in which it ceases to be exerted; few persons can stand or sit upright whilst they sleep, and we all know that a drunken man reels. Not only is it thus an operation of the mind, but it is one of its operations of which the mind takes note, and which becomes an element of knowledge. There is, undoubtedly, a knowledge of the conditions of equilibrium, resulting from this continual operation of preserving it, in respect to our own bodies, and in respect to the various bodies around us, on the equilibrium of which, almost everything we do is an experiment. Who, for instance, does not know with some such knowledge as this, instinctively as it were, whether a heavy mass be or be not so heavily loaded at the top as to be *top-heavy*, as it is termed, or liable to turn over, by ever so slight an inclination either way? We know at once, and without considering any reason on which our opinion may be grounded, whether a thing be *steady*, and thus we speak of its *looking steady*, or the contrary. And who, in the same way, is not acquainted in some degree with the properties of an inclined plane? He knows that more effort is required to ascend an eminence by a short and abrupt path, than by one which is longer and less inclined. This principle, known to every one, when a higher name, and somewhat more of precision, and a geometrical measurement, are given to it, becomes the theory of the inclined plane.

All these, and a thousand other things of the same class, are instances of the application of a knowledge of the nature of equilibrium, derived unconsciously from the precautions which we are obliged to take to preserve the equilibrium of our own bodies, and of the various bodies which we touch or move. But it is not only by observations like these that we are schooled in mechanics.

Everything in Nature is in a state of *equilibrium*, or of *motion*, and the conditions of that equilibrium, or that motion, as established by God, are continually forcing themselves on our attention. The trees, when their growth is unobstructed, throw out their branches *symmetrically* all around the trunk, so as to bring the centre of gravity of the whole within it. Its parts being incapable of altering their relative positions, as are those of the human body, so as under a great variety of circumstances to bring the centre

of gravity still over the same base, any inclination of the tree, such as the slightest wind would produce, would be sufficient to overthrow it, were it not that by its roots it is firmly fixed in the earth. Here, then, is evidence of the operation under another form of principles of equilibrium, analogous to those which fix the conditions of the equilibrium of the human body. Again, the branch of a tree, although it carries its greatest weight, and sustains chiefly the force of the wind at its extremity, yet has its thickness less there than anywhere else: it *tapers* from the point where it joins the trunk, through all the ramifications of its tributary branches, until each terminates in the slender stalk of a leaf. This *tapering* of the horizontal branch, as well as the trunk of a tree, conveys to any one who observes it attentively, an important lesson in the strength of materials. It teaches him that the strain, and the strength required to resist it, are greatest at those points which are most distant from that where the disturbing force is applied; and this principle, known to almost everybody, serves as an admirable guide in economizing the materials of construction.

It is almost impossible to fix upon any natural object which, if carefully considered, will not suggest conclusions equal in practical importance to this. Thus, all that he sees around him, and every attitude and position of his own body, suggests to a man some truth of practical mechanics. When, however, he comes to *apply* his physical power and his ingenuity to render these external things *materials*, subservient to his use, a far more extensive field of knowledge opens before him.

It is scarcely possible to conceive what may have been the *first* operation of man as an artificer. Suppose it to have been the breaking off of the branch of a tree. He would soon find that if he applied his strength near the insertion of the branch in the trunk, his task would be prodigiously more difficult than though he applied it near its extremity. And thus he would obtain a general notion of that important principle of mechanics which we call *leverage*, or a mechanical advantage. Branches of trees thus cut, might serve as a covering for a *hut* whose walls were built up of loose stones. It could scarcely happen, but that the fall of some one of them should instruct him in the secret of that wonderful force with which a body *moves*, and which it exerts when its motion is *arrested*. Already, then, we find him acquainted with those two *principles*, leverage and impact, which under their various forms comprise nearly all the mechanical agents by which, even at this day, the artificer moulds the substances around us to our use.

By passing the rough edge of a stone rapidly backwards and forwards on any substance which he wishes to divide, he obtains a rapid succession of impacts on minute portions of it, and thus easily tears asunder its parts in detail. Thus he arrives at the notion of a mechanical power, which may be considered the origin of the *saw*.

Applying the impact of some sharp stone directly to the separation of a piece of timber, a very short experience would show him, that *transversely*, or across the grain, it is almost impossible thus to separate it, but in the direction of its length, easy; and thus he gets the idea of the cleavage and of the *wedge*. At length comes a knowledge of the metals; his wooden lever then converts itself into a *crow-bar*,—his stone mallet into a *hammer*,—his rough edged stone into a *saw*,—his wedge into a *chisel*,—and his wedge-shaped stone hatchet into an iron *axe*.

His power over the materials of construction

would thus be prodigiously increased. His axe would bring down for him the largest tree of the forest, his saw would divide it into planks and timbers of any required dimensions, and his chisel would enable him to convert the rude materials of his dwelling into hewn and well-fitted stones.

By this time, and probably long before it, society will have attained that state in which one man has placed at his disposal the labour of others,—the first stage towards civilization. Prodigious of the labour of their subjects and their conquered slaves, the rulers of mankind, in that remote period of the history of our race, piled up for their dwellings, for their sepulchres, and for the temples of their gods, those huge edifices, monuments of their power and pride, of which the ruins remain even to our day. Of these, the most striking examples are the temples and sepulchres of Egypt*,—in the construction of some of which the Israelites were probably made to labour during the years of their captivity.

In this passion for architectural magnificence is to be found the cradle of art. The first implements of construction were, no doubt, the axe, the chisel, and the crow-bar. Ladders, ropes, and scaffolding, are, after these, easy steps in invention. Of the two first, the models would, indeed, be found in the successive branches of a tree, and in the matted and twisted creepers of the primæval forests. These are things which would, perhaps, from the first, have occurred to the rude artificer, and now that he seeks to raise a high and commanding structure, he calls to his aid a ladder to raise him to the top of its walls, and a rope to draw up his materials. Then would follow some contrivance for lifting these materials at a mechanical advantage.

That some such contrivance existed in the earliest state of society, is apparent from the fact, that the stones used in the masonry of that age were of enormous dimensions. Ruins of masonry are to be found in Italy, in Greece, and in other parts of Europe, of a period greatly antecedent to any historical record, whose stones, of rude workmanship and unhewn, nevertheless showing marks of the chisel in rough mortices and facings, are of such enormous dimensions, that no machine of the strength and size of those now used for the purposes of architecture could have raised them.

These structures in Greece† and Italy are called Cyclopean, from a fabulous notion prevalent in former times, that they were the architectural monuments of the Cyclops. In our own country we have numerous monuments of equally massive architecture; although not, perhaps, claiming so remote an antiquity; of these, the most remarkable is Stonehenge. Stones, such as we might, perhaps, readily enough make machines to lift, but such as none of our existing machines could lift, are there seen lifted up a considerable height above the earth, and propped like the lintel of a door upon others of still greater size, raised edgewise, and firmly fixed to these by the contrivance of a rude mortice and tenon. That these huge masses must have been raised by some mechanical advantage appears certain; by what, it is very difficult to say. There are two, however, of the mechanical powers known probably in the rudest state of society, which, if properly applied, would have been sufficient to the purpose. A series of efforts of the lever in its simplest form, would, with

the assistance of props, have raised the two supporting stones into their upright position, and the third stone might have been placed upon them by a long inclined plane, probably a mound of earth thrown up for the occasion.

The lever, the hammer, the chisel, the cord, the ladder, the inclined plane, the wedge, supply all that is necessary to the purposes of architecture. When, however, it became, as it appears to have done, a principal occupation to the labouring portion of the community, the ingenuity of men thus employed would come to be occupied, as we find it under similar circumstances invariably to be, in facilitating its various operations. In the moving of large masses of stone by means of a lever, the assistance which a rolling stone or some rounded piece of wood lying accidentally in its path would supply, could not be overlooked, and in the cylindrical roller which would thus soon be brought into use, we have the origin of the CARRIAGE WHEEL.

The greater physical force which a man can with comfort to himself exert in pulling from above his head downwards, than in lifting upwards, would soon suggest to him the expedient of passing a rope with which he wished to raise some object from below him, over a horizontal pole or projecting timber above his head. And from this, the transition to the pulley, by which the opposing friction would be lost, would be easy. The combination of the lever and cord under the form of the wheel and axle, does not, perhaps, belong to a much further stage of art.

The science of practical mechanics might, with these resources only, modified according to the circumstances of their application, have been sufficient to all the purposes of construction and the uses of architecture. Here we may, therefore, suppose it for a time to have remained.

THE race of mankind would perish, did they cease to aid each other. From the time that the mother binds the child's head, till the moment that some kind assistant wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help. All, therefore, that need aid, have right to ask it of their fellow-mortals; no one who holds the power of granting can refuse it without guilt.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

GRIEF at the loss of friends is natural. To say, therefore, that tears for the deceased are unreasonable, because they are unprofitable, is to speak without regard to the state and condition of human nature. A pious tear is a sign of humanity and generosity; but still, exceeding care must be taken, that men do not run into excesses in this kind. To *grieve* may be laudable; to be loud and querulous is childish; and to carry matters so far as to refuse comfort, is inexcusable. It is impious towards God, without whose permission nothing happens in the world; it expresses too great a disregard to other men, as though no one remained worthy of esteem or love; and is highly prejudicial to ourselves, as it impairs our health, weakens our minds, unfits us for several offices, and sometimes ends in death itself.—BISHOP CONYBEARE.

I MUST confess that I think there is no scheme of religion besides that of Christianity, which can possibly support the most virtuous person under the thought of the judgment. Let a man's innocence be what it will, let his virtues rise to the highest pitch of perfection attainable in this life, there will be still in him so many secret sins, so many human frailties, so many offences of ignorance, passion, and prejudice, so many unguarded words and thoughts, and, in short, so many defects in his best actions, that, without the advantage of such an expiation and atonement as Christianity has revealed to us, it is impossible that he should be cleared before his sovereign Judge, or that he should be able to stand in his sight. Our holy religion suggests to us the only means whereby our guilt may be taken away, and our imperfect obedience accepted.—ANDISON.

* There are no Palaces in Europe, says Mr. Hoskins, (Travels in Ethiopia,) which can compare in magnificence with the Sepulchre of the Kings at Thebes.

† The colossal wall at Tiryns, in the Peloponnesus, is an example; of a more advanced period of the same colossal architecture, are the military walls of Mycenæ.

NOTES ON FOREST TREES. No. XXI.

THE ALDER, (*Alnus glutinosa*.)

THE Alder belongs to the willow tribe, although it differs from it materially in form, and mode of growth. The Alder, like the willow, delights in low marshy grounds, near the banks of secluded streams; but the neighbourhood of running water seems not to be necessary to its welfare, as it will flourish in the most stagnant swamps. In beauty of form and picturesque appearance, this tree is unrivalled in river scenery.

He (says Gilpin) who would see the Alder in perfection, must follow the banks of the Mole, in Surrey, through the sweet vales of Dorking and Mickleham, into the groves of Esher. The Mole, indeed, is far from being a beautiful river. It is a silent and sluggish stream; but what beauty it has, it owes greatly to the Alder, which everywhere fringes its meadows, and in many places forms very pleasing scenes, especially in the vale between Box Hill and the high grounds of Norbury Park.

The Alder becomes more picturesque by age; but the great use of its timber, even when the tree is young, is the cause of very few full-grown trees being found. The largest in England in the time of Gilpin were at Bishops' Auckland, the seat of the Bishop of Durham:

Sir Thomas Dick Lauder says that in some parts of Scotland this tree assumes a character of much more dignity and grandeur than the specimens which are found in England.

In very many instances we have seen it put on so much of the bold and resolute character of the oak, that it might have been mistaken for that tree, but for the intense depth of its deep-green hue.

The wood of the Alder is much used, especially the young timber, in the manufacture of patten-boards, broom handles, and numerous other articles of common turnery, for which purpose it is well adapted, from the freedom with which it is worked. In Scotland, its chief consumption is in the manufacture of staves for herring-barrels. The wood of the old trees is considerably harder and full of knots, and when cut into planks has all the beauty of curled maple, with the advantage of possessing a deep, rich, reddish tint, and in this state it makes most beautiful

tables. Sir Thomas Dick Lauder has in his possession a table made of the wood of an old Alder tree, which he declares superior in beauty to any ever made from any foreign wood.



LEAVES, BLOSSOM, AND SEED-PODS OF THE ALDER.

The wood of the Alder is very liable to injury from a small beetle, and it is recommended, for the sake of preserving it from this injury, to dig a large hole in peat-moss, and to impregnate the water with which it is to be filled, with lime. The logs are to remain in this pickle for several months, and they are then said to be perfectly safe from their insect foe.

The largest tree noticed is in Scotland; it was 16 feet in circumference at four feet from the ground.

TO THE RIVER THAMES.

OLD Thames!—thou babbler!—noisy tyrant! proud

Thou art, and mighty in thy devious course!

Methinks thou need'st not be so rudely loud—

Look to the tiny dribbling of thy source!

But thou art like the wild and noisy crowd,

Vain and tumultuous—rushing on with force,

Regardless of the mud from which, forlorn,

A puny thing, thy *river-ship* was born!

Not that we deem an humble birth a crime—

Blest are the poor, the humble, and the meek—

But thou goest wallowing on, o'er weed and slime,

Swelling, all pompous, arrogant, and weak,

Thou only roar'st a short and fitful time:—

What doth thy long, yet futile history speak?

Thy waters still to flow—those flowed before,

Have been, or will be, swallowed at the Nore!

Yet, let the Muse no more condemn thy waters,

On whose rich banks in days of old were seen

Struggles for empire, and the strife of slaughters,

That dyed with tyrants' blood thy valleys green;

And there have dwelt, and dwell thy peerless daughters

Of grace and beauty—while thou flow'st, the Queen

Of Albion's Rivers—by the glorious city,

Which holds the fair, the rich, the gay, the witty.

Yes! thou art London's boast!—sufficient praise

To give a wild and rambling stream, like thee—

That huge metropolis!—her vitals raise

A race of heroes, bold of heart, and free.

What wondrous men are in her crowded ways,

Rare imps of science and philosophy!

There are heads too, which never dare aspire,

With all their brains, to—*set the Thames on fire*.

Flow on, fair stream! and, as thy waters speed

To Ocean's bosom, nor return again,

In this we may a timely lesson read,

And think how swiftly to that troublous main,

Where our frail bark will a true pilot need,

Time bears us on, through pleasure and through pain,

And, as the waves pass rapidly away,

We pass as certain and as swift as they.—*BIRD.*

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